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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LITERARY ASPECTS OF MAXIM GORKY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RUSSIAN INTELLIGENTSIA, 1892-1906

by ANDREW RODOMAR

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN THE FIELD OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1992

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ISBN 0-315-73269-5

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DEGREE: Master of Arts

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1992

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Andrew Rodomar

84 Kendal Avenue,
Toronto, Ontario

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled: **'Literary Aspects of Maxim Gorky's Relationship with the Russian Intelligentsia, 1892-1906'** submitted by Andrew Rodomar in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

P. Rolland
Dr. P. Rolland

T. Yedlin
Dr. T. Yedlin

Mozejko
Dr. E. Mozejko

May 9, 1991

Abstract

Maxim Gorky's relationship to the Russian intelligentsia was a defining feature of his career as a writer (at a time when this narrow social caste was itself coming under increasing and contradictory pressures). This study uses the image of the tribe and the individual as a metaphor for this relationship, and describes the process by which Gorky came to fuse a voluntaristic philosophy of the heroic individual with his own role as a writer. Examples from Gorky's early short stories reflect the idea of a strong will drawing around itself the positive (or negative) strength of the collective in a way which transforms both. This philosophy turned the writer against the dominant spiritualistic trends among his literary colleagues, who, from Gorky's perspective, lacked the necessary will to play a positive historical role in Russia's development.

The writer's struggle against *'meshchanstvo'* (the bourgeois mentality) was sharpened by the intelligentsia's rejection of the 1905 revolution, producing a series of works with strongly anti-intelligentsia, pro-Bolshevik themes. Underlying this hostility, however, was a faith in the intelligentsia's capacity to overcome the power of *meshchanstvo*, and place its culture and knowledge in the service of the revolution and the people. This was reflected in a cycle of four dramatic works between 1904 and 1906, which depicts the intelligentsia as poised on the brink of destruction, but offers them the possibility of escaping the impending catastrophe through an alliance with the proletariat. Ultimately, Gorky's effort to develop a model of the positive hero based on the social democratic worker came into conflict with his purely voluntaristic and utopian

impulses. These, in turn, laid the basis for a reconcilliation between Gorky and his literary intelligentsia colleagues after 1907.

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Introduction

The literary intelligentsia of the Russian Empire at the turn of the twentieth century adopted Maxim Gorky (formerly Alexei Peshkov) almost literally as a foundling. The particular process of Peshkov-Gorky's ascension from anonymous 'vagrancy' to an unprecedented type of international literary superstardom itself provided the basis of a modern literary mythology which long predated the state-sponsored cults of the Stalin period. While the process of Gorky's adoption itself deserves critical study, the following paper will make use of the image of adoption for metaphorical rather than biographical purposes.

Any adoption involves a complex and subjective interaction between 'parent' and 'child.' The parent which adopted the tramp, was, in fact an entire social caste. The Russian intelligentsia quite consciously embraced Gorky as the representative voice of 'the people.' Its adopted child was in turn obliged to fulfill the roles of literary symbol, literary voice and social protagonist against a backdrop of wrenching class conflict and revolutionary upheaval over the decade which followed his meteoric rise to prominence.

Because of Gorky's adherence in 1905 to the cause of the revolutionary proletariat against the liberal inclinations which predominated among the intelligentsia, the former tramp was disowned by many of those who had previously taken him in. As a result, the adoption was deeply affected by multiple crises of identity which affected both parties, and the course of Russian literature itself, giving rise to controversies unresolved even to this day.[1]

What defined the mutual relationship of Gorky and the intelligentsia as a 'familial' one was the fact that, in spite of its many strains, this link survived as

an unconditional bond to the writer's death. To describe this relationship, the present study borrows the literary image of the tribe *vis a vis* the heroic individual which appears in the early tale *Starukha Izergil* ('Old Woman Izergil,' 1893). The metaphor is appropriate for two reasons: first, because for the heroes Danko and Larra, their link with the collective, or tribe, was ultimately the defining relationship of their characters. Second, soon after his career as a writer began, Gorky explicitly adopted a worldview which transferred to the writer-*intelligent* (himself) the role of protagonist in the battle to save the tribe (the intelligentsia) by turning it toward the revolutionary transformation of society. As this study will seek to demonstrate, Gorky's relationship to the Russian intelligentsia, for all its ambivalences and difficulties, was a defining feature of his literary and political career.

In contrast, no such profound underlying attachment existed between Gorky and the revolutionary movement. The often fractured and sporadic alliance which existed between Gorky and the Bolsheviks was itself conditioned by the writer's own belief that only through the self-sacrificing impulse of the revolutionary intelligentsia could the masses share in the higher world of cultural value reserved, in pre-revolutionary Russia, for the tiny few. This was a view that had little in common with Marxism, but which was nourished by deep roots in the traditions of the Russian intelligentsia. The writer's embrace of this tradition made political disagreements with his literary colleagues secondary to this common aim and worldview. A consistent explanation for the successive episodes of rejection, rapprochement and reconciliation between the writer and the Bolshevik Party, and later the Soviet regime under Stalin, is thus to be found not in a political realm as much as in a cultural one.

The present study began with the search for a focal point which would bring together key aspects of the relationship of Gorky to the Russian intelligentsia.

Initially this project centered on Gorky's involvement, together with other revolutionary-minded members of the intelligentsia, in the political, philosophical, and literary project of *bogostroitel'stvo* (god-building), the founding of a new human-centered religion of socialism. From initial research, however, it soon became clear that this effort to define a topic was both too broad and too confining.

In the first place, god-building was not primarily an approach to literature as such, but more a cluster of ideological hypotheses. Its only manifestation in the realm of literature, the novel *Ispoved'* (A Confession, 1908) represents a deservedly forgotten episode between the great popular success of *Mat'* (The Mother, 1906), and the artistic 'comeback' represented by *Detstvo* (My Childhood, 1911). The real significance of this episode lies properly in the realm of intellectual history rather than literature.

Secondly, in attempting to isolate one set of ideas, themes, or characters as specific to god-building in Gorky's literary *oeuvre* (rather than seeing it as merely a specific conjuncture in the writer's life), one reaches the necessary conclusion that Gorky was a 'god-builder' from at least the first year of his publishing career. Whatever Gorky may have learned in his close collaboration with Lunacharsky, Bogdanov, and others at the left-Bolshevik 'party school' at Capri, it introduced nothing new into the writer's thematic vocabulary. From this point of view, an examination of Gorky's earlier writings for incipient 'signs' of god-building would also be an error--on the order of the tail wagging the dog.

We are thus pushed to examine the thematic preoccupations of Gorky's earlier work as a reflection of their own intellectual and psychological circumstances. This is especially true of the aspect which initially motivated the present study: Gorky's relationship with the Russian intelligentsia, and the

tensions created in this relationship by the writer's identification with the revolutionary workers' movement.

The most recent wave of Gorky scholarship outside the Soviet Union has included a new attention to the influence on the young writer of the the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Until around 1970, the Nietzschean influence was given sparse attention by both Soviet and Western Gorky specialists.[2] As Louise Loe, whose valuable contribution to this debate appears in the 1986 anthology Nietzsche in Russia,[3] explains: 'Nietzsche's influence on Gorky was a dominant and lasting one, remaining with him even after he had joined the Bolsheviks and had gone on to become the most important literary figure in the Soviet Union. Yet there has been no attempt to explain why the young Gorky found Nietzsche's philosophy so appealing and how his vision of the new man differed from Nietzsche's own.'[4] Like many of her colleagues in recent Gorky scholarship, Loe inclines toward a view of the writer as being heavily indebted to Nietzsche for his philosophical outlook. As valuable as the contribution of this vein of exploration has been to shedding new light on our understanding of Gorky, the present study is aimed, at least in a small measure, at bending the stick once again in another direction.

While the evidence that Gorky both read and discussed Nietzsche's ideas from the early stages of his career is well-documented,[5] any assessment of the actual degree of Nietzsche's influence on the young writer, independent of other factors, is by nature a more subjective undertaking. As this study seeks to emphasise, Gorky's inclination toward a strict voluntarism was not primarily a result of Nietzsche's influence, but arose from a predisposition in the writer which exposure to Nietzsche's works helped to crystalise at an early stage.

The term voluntarism is used here to describe not so much Nietzsche's worldview, but Gorky's own preoccupation with the role of will in the life of the

individual and the collective. The Nietzschean conception of the strong, belligerent personality as the source and jusification for its own existence underwent significant alterations in the course of Gorky's development as a writer. The concept of individual rebellion and rejection of externally imposed conformity by the action of individual will strongly echoes similar aspects of the Nietzschean *Uebermensch*, a figure set apart by his unique desire to face the truth, unedited and free of illusion. In contrast to Nietzsche, Gorkian voluntarism introduced a dimension of collective morality which enjoined the intelligentsia to reject its particular spiritual dependence on the values of *meshchanstvo* ('the bourgeois mentality').

The impulse toward voluntarism (and toward Nietzsche) was significantly a function of the writer's contradictory social position.[6] This unique role made him by turns a revolutionary activist in the camp of the liberal intelligentsia, and (especially later) an ambassador of the intelligentsia to the camp of the Bolsheviks. The fact that the Russian revolution often pushed these social forces in opposite directions is, as we have noted, one key to the meaning of Gorky's career as a literary activist.

By underlining this reality, this study takes no part in the ideological tug of war between a Russian Gorky and a cosmopolitan one, a Western 'democratic' Gorky and a Soviet Stalinist one. The writer's absorption of any number of discrete influences was conditioned by the reality of the Russian intelligentsia struggling to define its role in and/or against a social revolution. In this world Gorky sought a utopia: to save the tribe, the intelligentsia, from itself through the 'strong will' of his own literary activism.

The following chapters attempt to trace aspects of Gorky's attitude to the intelligentsia through publicistic writings and correspondence, samples of the early short stories, and in the cluster of dramatic works produced between 1904-

06. The works discussed below are in no way intended to be an exhaustive selection from Gorky's *oeuvre* at the time, nor even definitive for the particular points they illustrate. Pursuit of a 'positive hero,' for example, was an important but not all-consuming thematic interest on Gorky's part (and did not often result in the writer's greatest artistic successes). This pursuit was, however, a key element in a more important preoccupation of the young writer: his struggle for the soul of the Russian intelligentsia. A survey of this tendency in Gorky's work can partially resolve, on the level of critique, some of the irreconcilable contradictions which gave rise to the writer's 'own truth' in the first decade of his profound literary influence.

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[1] The current renewal of interest in the liberal tradition represented in the anthology of essays on the Russian intelligentsia published in 1910 under the title *Vekhi* (Signposts), indicates that the issues addressed by Gorky on this subject are far from dead.

[2] The renaissance in studies on the Gorky-Nietzsche link appears to have been initiated by historian George Kline, who authored the groundbreaking article 'Nietzschean Marxism in Russia' (1969). Prior to this, biographical studies of Gorky tended to overlook this relationship. See for example Richard Hare, Maxim Gorky, Romantic Realist and Conservative Revolutionary (London, Oxford University Press,1962), Irwin Weil, Gorky: His Literary Development and Influence in Soviet Intellectual Life (New York, Random House, 1966). A Soviet 'anti-Nietzschean' perspective on Gorky is to be found in A. Volkov, *M. Gor'kii i literaturnoe dvizhenie kontsa XIX i nachala XX vekov* (Moscow, *Prosveshchenie,*1954).

[3] Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal ed., Nietzsche in Russia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). This anthology includes a section specifically devoted to the god-builders' circle under the heading 'Nietzsche's Influence on Russian Marxism', with articles by Mary Louise Loe, A.M. Tait, and Zenovia Sochor.

[4] M. Loe, 'Gorky and Nietzsche,' Ibid., p. 252.

[5] The writer's first exposure to Nietzsche came through a manuscript translation of Also sprach Zarathustra by N. Z. Vasiliev, which came into Gorky's hands in the early 1890s. See Loe, ibid., p. 256.

[6] It is also important to note that Gorky's voluntaristic philosophy was prone to fluctuate toward an equally unrefined and mechanical economic determinism. See the discussion of *Zametki o meshchanstve,* Chapter II, below.

THE WRITER AND HIS TRIBE

The Problem of the Russian Intelligentsia in the Early Work of Maxim Gorky

The pre-revolutionary Russian intelligentsia which greeted the appearance of Gorky's early tramps, gypsies, and folk heroes with such acclaim was a heterogeneous and often contradictory social caste.[1] It's numerous currents and eddies have provided scholarship with a seemingly inexhaustable vein of materials for study and debate, far out of proportion, in many respects, to its size and direct influence. A commonly accepted numerical figure for this sector of educated Russian society at the turn of the twentieth century is 50,000 people, a minute fraction of the population.[2]

In his account of the revolution of 1905, Trotsky gave the following concise account of the peculiarities of this generation:

> We have a hopelessly retarded bourgeois intelligentsia born to the accompaniment of socialist imprecations, which today is suspended over an abyss of class contradictions, weighed down with feudal traditions, and caught in a web of academic prejudices, lacking initiative, lacking all influence over the masses, and devoid of all confidence in the future.[3]

Indeed, Trotsky's thumbnail sketch is helpful in explaining, from one side, the attraction which Gorky's figure had on his adoptive milieu, and the particular role Gorky played for his Russian literary public as a *persona*, and not merely as a writer. The popularity of the young Gorky involved a mixture of legend and reality. The writer's own character was such that it

facilitated a close identification, in the minds of his readers, with the romantic world and characters who populated his works. In turn, the strikingly fresh and living portrayal of these new populations of literature ushered in by Gorky's pen represented a welcome breeze in the stuffy atmosphere of nineteenth century realism. For a Russian intelligentsia 'suspended over an abyss' of contradictions, both the *persona* and the literature proved highly attractive.

In Gorky's personal behaviour, life could not have seemed more a realisation of art. Although his class origins were from ruined Volga merchants, rather than the peasantry or proletariat, this detail was thoroughly eclipsed by the resonance of Gorky's image as a pure representative of 'the people.' As myth was blended with reality, Gorky's unpolished behaviour and dress clashed dramatically with the conventions of his bourgeois literary audiences. With a measure of connivance on both sides, the writer's ascension was marked at each stage with a whiff of scandal. For an intelligentsia psychologically and socially isolated from 'the people,' an element of vicariousness only added greater lustre to the myth.[4]

But for all its narrowness and detachment from society, the Russian intelligentsia which welcomed Gorky's early stories during the 1890s was anything but homogeneous and stable in its views of literature and of the world. And this fact contributed to the permanent tensions and mutual ambivalence betweeen the writer and his tribe.

For the youthful intelligentsia, the best and brightest of two generations of the minor gentry, educated peasants, and children of the clergy, artisans, workers in the Russian Empire, the second half of the nineteenth century was characterised by successive waves of revolutionary ardor. Under different political banners, a series of radical movements from this thin stratum of society emerged to pound themselves against the foundations of the autocratic

regime heroically, but unsuccessfully. If the various ideologies and social orientations which motivated these movements after 1860 had any common feature, it was a pervasive and militant atheism and humanism which derived, at least formally, from the traditions of the Western Enlightenment. With few exceptions, enmity toward religion was common to Anarchists, Nihilists, Marxists, and all the intervening gradations of Russian radicalism.

In this respect, a new sense of uncertainty distinguished the generation of intellectuals who came to maturity during the 1890s from those which immediately preceded them. The first explosion of industrial capitalism in the Russian Empire was attended by the collapse of the Populist movement, which had furnished a broadly unifying social and political vision to idealistic and educated youth in the two preceeding decades. From the declining Populist movement emerged a number of heterogeneous fragments. On one side, this development spawned the early Russian Marxists, whose materialist philosophy welcomed the wrenching changes heralded by industrial capitalism. On the other side, Populism's collapse also gave birth to a resurgence of religious, mystical, and anti-rationalist currents which had a profound affect on the art, literature, and politics of the period leading up to the First World War. This broad movement, which embraced sharply conflicting political, philosophical and esthetic trends, but consistently inclined toward idealism and theological concerns, became generally termed 'the new religious consciousness.'[5]

Gorky was one of the few writers of the 1890s who was claimed, for different reasons, by supporters of both the materialist and spiritualist trends among the intelligentsia. At the same time, however, Gorky himself never became a reliable partisan of either wing. For the purposes of this study, we focus particularly on the writer's relationship with the dominant, spiritually-

inclined section of the intelligentsia, against whom Gorky polemicised most sharply in the pre-1905 period.

GORKY AND THE 'GOD-SEEKING' INTELLIGENTSIA

Although the development of mystical and idealist currents of thought in educated society have often been connected with the new uncertainties which accompanied the inroads of industrial capitalism in Russia, this particular conception was of little interest to partisans of the new religious consciousness. The latter looked back decades, even centuries for moral and philosohical foundations in both Christian theology and more esoteric religious traditions. The issues of a changing time were considered among spiritually-inclined intellectuals as merely the reflection of eternal human dilemmas.

In nineteenth century Russian literature, of course, there was no time when mystical and religious ideas did not contend with prevailing humanistic and materialist trends. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy developed perspectives which, although radically differing from each other, both embraced a religious conception of human existence. It should be pointed out, however, that even in their most anti-materialist and anti-revolutionary writings both authors implicitly recognized of the oppressive and unjustifiable nature of Russian life, especially for the poor. At issue was not so much defense of the prevailing order (although this became a prominent feature of Dostoevsky's later work), but the *proper moral response to the problem of evil.* From this point of view also, these authors can also be seen as rebelling against both the prevailing order of things and the materialist revolutionary disposition of their contemporaries. In this respect, they were emulated by their successors during the idealist resurgence of the 1890s.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Russian idealism had also begun to adopt a different character, one which could only be distantly related to its radical, albeit anti-revolutionary, forebears. Characteristic of the new trend expressed in literature by Merezhkovsky, Filosofov, Gippius, Rozanov and Bely, was not so much an anti-revolutionary disposition as an anti-political one. In this regard the new idealists reflected the ideas and values expressed in the writings of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, a point of reference that was later to be shared by Gorky and other left intellectuals. This is not to say that these writers should be considered apart from politics (in some cases they considered themselves to be radical, even revolutionary), but for the most part they, like Nietzsche, conceived political change as the product of spiritual and esthetic transformations, rather than the reverse. [6] If the word militancy can be applied to the representatives of the new religious consciousness in literature, it is to their refusal to recognise politics as having more than a superficial significance.

A clear picture of Gorky's intimate familiarity with (and ambivalence toward) the ideology of the literary intelligentsia which lionized him appears in the extensive personal correspondence the author maintained with numerous friends and literary contacts. Gorky regularly expressed misgivings about the type of spiritual leanings, broadly termed 'god-seeking,' which were gaining more ground among his colleagues by the turn of the century.

In 1901, Gorky's correspondence with publicist V.S. Miroliubov[7] took on a pointed quality as he began to detect the growing influence on Miroliubov of Merezhkovsky.[8] The latter's mystical and religious inclinations Gorky perceived as exclusively harmful. His contempt for Merezhkovsky's brand of religious escapism, as well as his conviction that this fraudulent spirituality

was based on moral weakness, is evident in the following passage from the author's correspondence with Miroliubov:

> I think that all these little people have taken to god-searching out of shame for the emptiness of their life, or out of fear of its contradictions. They see their fellow-men being crushed more and more heavily under the caprice of those swine, who are drunk with power; they see their fellow-men suffering unbearably all around them. They are conscious of them with that lecherous and cowardly Russian kind of conscience, like the onanist's imagination.[9]

At the same time as he denounced the fraudulent motivations of escapist god-seekers, however, Gorky showed little interest in attacking the anti-rationalist *content* of the god-seekers' philosophy. The evil is the cringing weakness which motivates the intellectual, not the substance of his thoughts.

At about the same time as he was conducting a polemic against god-seeking through his correspondence with Miroliubov, Gorky published an article in a Nizhny local newspaper, entitled *O razmagnichennom intelligente* ('On the Demagnetised Intellectual').[10] Picking up on a recently published anthology of essays by prominent liberals, Gorky finds a useful metaphor among the musings on deficiencies of the Russian educated class. Even a piece of untempered iron, as the metaphor goes, can retain magnetic properties when surrounded by 'living currents' *(zhivye toki)*. It can even animate magnetic properties around itself, and will not 'demagnetise' as long as it is connected to currents which conduct energy. The absence of such living currents creates a situation where the intellectual, very much an example of 'soft iron', is unable to feel the strength of his former convictions.

Gorky accepts the analogy as both true and false. 'The falsehood I hear,' writes Gorky, 'is in the words: "Only permit living currents to flow around me - and strength will manifest itself within me".' As far as the demagnetised intellectual is concerned, Gorky believes, the problem is not any imagined absence of 'living forces' in his environment:

> Alas, living currents are at work in life and magnetize steel, but no force has manifested itself in the demagnetized intellectual -- he sits in his warm spot, his comfortable spot, surrounded by his dear playmates, and, observing the living currents which are creating life, the well-fed and clever little fellow skeptically criticises them.[11]

At the heart of the intellectual's weakness is a discrepancy between what he knows to be true and his habits of life:

> He--the soft iron--has been eaten away by rust, and lives peaceably, 'with a conciliatory attitude toward the despicable.' He no longer believes in the integrity and strength of his old convictions, for believing means to live according to your belief. He hasn't actually repented of his beliefs, it's true. They--the convictions, that is--are still nearby, they've just made themselves a bit less conspicuous. On special occasions, when surrounded by good friends, he hauls them out and puts them on, like a pair of gloves, or a necktie, like festive apparel.[12]

Gorky's exasperation with Miroliubov over these spiritual questions was soon to be repeated, although in a less decisive manner, in his friendship with Leonid Andreev.[13] This time, however, Gorky's antipathy was directed at Miroliubov himself. As Miroliubov had fallen under the spell of Merezhkovsky's religious escapism, now Andreev seemed to Gorky to be sliding under the influence of Miroliubov. A 1904 letter to Andreev also includes passages of almost visceral hostility to intellectuals aloof from the revolutionary movement. As it condemns their spinelessness, and its manifestation in a counterfeit form of spirituality, his motive is once again to preserve a deeper, more authentic and human-centered morality. His orientation was always one of driving the money changers form the temple, thus cleansing the religious impulse of *'meshchanstvo,'*(the bourgeois mentality),[14] which for Gorky was embodied in the anti-revolutionary stream of the intelligentsia.

Gorky's hostility to the intelligentsia came from one who was all too aware of the frailties of his own milieu. In a subsequent letter to Andreev, Gorky sets out the typical pattern he perceives. The portrait of the intellectual is one of contradictions weighted in favour of a certain self-interest and moral

cowardice. Ironically, the contradiction for the intellectual arises directly out of his self-perception. After 'surveying his own limp soul, strewn with all sorts of trash, he discovers among other things in it a small desire: "to serve the people".' But this commitment is itself, from Gorky's point of view, corrupted from the start by self-interest. The image of the ex-democrat 'god-seeker'[15] is viciously lampooned in the following paragraph:

> But after a little time has passed, he feels that this task does not take care of his personal doubts, his personal fear of life and death, he is not strong or fundamentally honest enough to know how to separate his personal desires from the desires common to all people...he is afraid of his own limitations, his own doubts, his solitude. Extending his personal view of life to all, he throws himself fearfully into the corner of a dark larder where a lamp flickers before an ikon of the Mother of God. He screams and bawls: 'The harmonious life cannot be constructed without acknowledging an external rational force, without an idea of God. God cannot be comprehended outside those representations of him which the Church has established.'[16]

Gorky follows this passage with a suggestion that 'making philosophy' in this way is comparable to defecating in public, and adds that 'the Russian writer, in view of the general barbarity of the people around him, must be in part a sanitation officer, sometimes he is obliged to remind the public of the significance of water closets...'[17]

Gorky's attacks, both public and private against his more spiritually-inclined colleagues did not go unanswered. One of his more insightful adversaries, Zinaida Gippius,[18] developed a view of the writer which well expressed the hostility of her milieu to toward 'Great Maxim's constellation,' and prefigured a host of more contemporary critiques of Gorky.

Gippius' anxieties over the rise of Gorky and its implications were both esthetic and ideological. In the first case, Gorky's heavy-handed didacticism and apparent lack of concern for craftsmanship as a writer made his characters and landscapes suffer from crudity and sameness. For Gippius, the popularity of his stories merely showed Gorky to be symptomatic of a general decline in Russian

literature.[19] On an ideological level, Gippius saw Gorky as calling on men to seek 'an ultimate, death-bringing emancipation from the ideas of christianity, from love and morals, ...knowledge and sense of beauty; moral obligation and family; hope and fear...'[20] From her perspective, the type of emancipation espoused by her adversary could emerge only at the expense of man's spiritual dimension, and would therefore render him no better than an animal.

Although her first critical treatments of Gorky were not without a certain sympathy, even admiration, this gradually gave way to a sneering monotone of hostility, which saw in him only a lower-class mediocrity, whose talents, meagre enough to begin with, were destroyed by the venom of his own preaching. Clearly the esthetic and ideological objections raised by Gippus and her circle against Gorky come fom the fact that their worldview was counterposed to the social-democratic ideology with which they associated him. At the same time, however, Gippius once refered to Gorky as 'this champion of the intellectuals in peasant's boots,'[21] capturing the ambivalent aspect of the writer's position. On other occasions she eliminated the nuance, describing Gorky merely as 'a naked savage, with a top-hat on his head.'[22]

For his part, Gorky continued his appeals to friends and colleagues to resist the blandishments of the god-seekers. Like Gippius, he brought to this task a sense of urgency zeal, which clearly went beyond simple advocacy of one point of view over another. Both sides in the contest were fighting above all for the moral high-ground, and Gorky shared with his opponents the implicit (and highly unmarxist) belief that this was the ground on which the soul of the intelligentsia would be won or lost.

A relatively early example of Gorky's fictional treatment of the intelligentsia appears in *Varen'ka Olesova* (1897). In this excursion into the world of the minor gentry, the writer sketches the portrait of the intellectual in

the character of Ippolit Sergeevich Polkanov. Unlike the god-seekers, Polkanov, a young professor of botany in a provincial university, is a rationalist and materialist. In common with the more mystically inclined intellectuals, however, Polkanov uses his ideas as a means to escape life's contradictions. Every living phenomenon, including his own feelings, the young scientist attempts to intellectualise and reduce into bloodless formulas. His views are typically progressive, even radical, albeit detatched from any application to real life.

Over a summer visiting his sister's estate in the country, Polkanov meets and soon falls under the spell of a beautiful young woman who lives on a neighbouring estate. Varen'ka Vasilevna Olesova is the daughter of a wealthy but moribund local landowner, and is soon to inherit his property. She is indifferently educated, reads trashy novels, and has nothing but bemused contempt for Polkanov's pompous sermons on human equality, or principles of justice. Ignorance does not make Olesova stupid or weak, however. In her first meeting with Polkanov, for example, she unconsciously shows herself unaware of the difference between Polkanov's profession, botany (a science), and gardening (a functional skill), believing them to be one and the same thing. Significantly, it is Polkanov who comes off the worse from this exchange, as Olesova, secure in her own world of value and purpose, simply concludes from the discussion that Polkanov lacks a skill she had earlier attributed to him.

Olesova is also a naturally dominant figure, and accepts without question her right to have power over others. At one point Olesova calmly explains how, in the course of her duties in looking after her family's property, she personally applied the whip to a peasant who had disobeyed her.

> 'You!? You thrashed him? But...How did you do that?,' exclaimed Polkanov.
> 'Very simply, I beat him with father's whip, and that was that! It was threshing time, you understand, we were terribly busy, and he, the brute, was

> stoned drunk! I lost my temper. So he can just go out and get drunk when the work is really hopping, and I need him to keep a sharp eye on everything? These peasants, they...'
>
> 'But just a moment, Varvara Vasilyevna,' he began with great conviction, but as mildly as he could, 'Is it really a good thing to beat a servant? Is it really...proper?...'[23]

Polkanov patiently explains to Varen'ka what ideals, in his view, she should strive for in life, and the type of hero she should respect.

> 'It is the duty of every honest person,' explained Ippolit Sergeevich, full of conviction, 'to bring all his mind, and all his heart to the struggle for the oppressed, and their right to live; trying either to help lessen the suffering of that struggle, or to quicken its course. That is why real heroism is needed, and it is in this struggle that you must look for it. Outside of this struggle there is no heroism worthy of admiration and emulation... and that is the struggle to which you, Varvara Vasilevna, ought to direct your attention; that is where you ought to look for heroes, and where you should give your energies; for you could, as it seems to me, become a staunch defender of truth. But above all, you need to read a great deal; you need to learn to understand life stripped of its fantasies; you need to throw all those stupid novels into the fire.'

A moment later Varen'ka replies: 'How nicely and well you talk! Do they all talk so well at the university?'[24]

Soon afterward the conversation turns to Varenka's idea of what is attractive in a man:

> '...I can't stand small, sweet, modest men! A man should be tall and strong. He speaks loudly, has large, fiery eyes -- and his feelings should know no obstacle; he desires something, and it's his. There's a man for you!'
>
> 'I don't think any such men exist anymore,' said Ippolit Sergeevich dryly, feeling at the same time that her ideal of a man disgusted him.
>
> 'They must!' she exclaimed with conviction.
>
> 'And in any case, what you have depicted is really some kind of wild animal. What could be attractive about such a monster?'
>
> 'It's not a wild animal -- it's a strong man! Strength --that's what's attractive!'[25]

To begin with, the scientist makes a half-hearted project of attempting to rehabilitate the 'girl,' and force her to recognise his intellectual and moral superiority, but finds himself having no effect on her. Instead, the tables are gradually turned, as Olesova's beauty, sexuality, and her raw psychic energy come more and more to assert themselves over (and throw into sharp relief) Polkanov's spinelessness, self-absorption, and lack of passionate conviction--even in his own ideas.

In spite of her reactionary, even barbarous, qualities, Olesova is intended to be seen as an admirable and attractive character--in fact the only such character in the story. Her willfulness has no trace of affectation or cynicism. The immutable inequality she perceives between herself and those 'beneath' her in a rigidly ordered universe does not inspire her condescension toward them. Contempt is something she reserves for those who are supposedly her social 'equals,' including family, suitors, and eventually Polkanov himself. The provincial Olesova seems linked to Russia's feudal past, but only by virtue of the fact that this is the only world, outside romantic novels, with which she is familiar. Polkanov's failure to convince her of his 'correct' and progressive ideas is the result of his own pusillanimity, not of Olesova's ideological hardness. She surveys the landscape of her young life in the hope of meeting a will stronger than her own; finding none, she is isolated from others as if standing on a mountain peak.

A sub-plot in *Varen'ka Olesova* introduces Polkanov to Benkovsky, his sister's romantic young fiance, an idealist, whose passionate naivete is the polar opposite to Polkanov's cold rationalism. As the two men debate the merits of their philosophies, Polkanov sneers to himself about the ineffectual character of his future brother-in-law, and becomes uncomfortably conscious of how easily the young idealist is being manipulated by his pragmatic and venal sister. What Polkanov's keen scientific eye fails to detect is the weakness of will and ultimate passivity he himself shares with the despised Benkovsky.

In the end Polkanov's subjection to Varen'ka is complete (symbolised by her rising naked from a bath in the river and beating the scholar unconscious for having spied on her), as is her contempt for him. Although the story and characters are not fully developed in Gorky's hands, this work gives a clear picture of the intelligentsia as a specimen under Gorky's microscope, and

introduces themes which are to become more and more prominent in Gorky's later works, as indicated in the essays and personal letters cited above. For Gorky, the intelligentsia's features include an exaggerated view of its own importance, accompanied by a distorted preoccupation with issues that are abstract to the point of trivialty; the intellectual lacks physical courage and strength and displays a corresponding weakness of will, and lack of self-knowledge. Over the course of the story, Polkanov is never even able to decide for himself whether or not he loves the young girl whom he has decided to 'save.'

Like Polkanov, the intelligentsia, from Gorky's point of view, is inclined (if not destined) to fall under the influence of a stonger force, and finally capitulate, betraying its own ideals under the lash of the more powerful will. For such a weak character, it is clear that rationalist and materialist ideas, even coupled with a sense of social justice, are in themselves inadequate so long as the intellectual himself lacks the inspiration and drive to realize them in life.

Clearly, Gorky's rejection of mystical and idealistic preoccupations among his contemporaries was not posed in the writer's mind as a conflict between rationalism and faith or superstition. Instead the writer displayed a moral disgust for what appeared to him as the manifestation of weakness and impotence. Gorky was, after all, especially preoccupied in his appeals to friends and colleagues with *rescuing* their spiritual impulses from being prostituted in the interests of the oppressive status quo. Gorky's battle with the intelligentsia was not fundamentally over ideas, but over the question of will.

However, at the same time as Gorky lamented the lack of strong will among the intelligentsia, he could not permit himself the luxury of fatalism in relation to his tribe. Instead he sought to inspire the *intelligent* to 'overcome himself,' and take his rightful place at the head of the fight for a new world.

Gorky makes this point explicit in the story *Chitatel'* ('The Reader'), a work which provoked some controversy even before it was published in 1897,[26] but which, as the author wrote in a letter to his future wife, expressed 'his own truth.'

In this story the narrator (Gorky) is confronted with the figure of 'the reader,' who remonstrates with him regarding his true role in society. The task of the artist is to offer 'a way out to light, to truth, to beauty, to an new life.'

This vision is counterposed to the chronic incapacities of the intelligentsia, in what was to become a regular refrain:

> An odour of decay hangs over our life; cowardliness and servility saturate the heart; laziness binds the mind and hands with its soft chains. What do you bring into this chaos of wretchedness? How petty you are; how sad, and how many of you there are! Oh, if only there would appear a stern and loving man with a flaming heart and a powerful, all-embracing mind! In the suffocation of shameful silence, the weighted words would ring out like the tolling of a bell, and perhaps they would shake up the despicable souls of the living corpses.[27]

The writer is thus to become a new Danko,[28] an individual possessed not only of the intelligence, but also the will necessary to lead his collective in achieving its proper transformative goals, and the creation of a new life, through the ability of his 'powerful words' to 'shake up' a dead, stagnant existence.

In arriving at these conclusions, Gorky was fully conscious of its personal implications. The dialogue between writer and reader originated for Gorky in a debate he was having with himself. As he wrote of the story in a letter to the painter Repin: 'I, as a man, am dissatisfied with myself, the writer, for I have read too much and books have robbed my soul.'[29] This admission adds another dimension to the writer's later battles with Andreev, Miroliubov and others.

Whatever Gorky's reputation as an outsider within the tribe which had adopted him, however the writer's entry into the literary world may have given

him the appearance of authentic otherness, as an artist Gorky had early and inseparably tied his own fate with that of his literary milieu, felt its pressures and attractions, and feared for its future. Clearly, even as early as 1897, with the publication of *Chitatel'*, Gorky had assumed the role of real-life writer-protagonist to save not only his tribe, but also himself.

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1 This term is used for the purposes of this study to designate the intelligentsia as a layer of the petty bourgeoisie, also a quite heterogeneous class formation in Russian society. The point here is to reject any concept that there exists such a thing as a single 'petty bourgeois' class ideology (which Gorky, as a writer, could then be accused of reflecting), at the same time as we recognise the importance of Gorky's social origin to his literary and ideological point of view.

2 C. Read , Religion, Revolution and the Russian Intelligentsia, London: McMillan, 1979, p. 7.

3 L.D. Trotsky, 1905 (Anya Bostock, transl.), London: Pelican, 1971. p. 59., as quoted in Edward Brown, ed., Gorky: Five Plays (London: Methuen), p. xx.

4 See N. Gourfinkel, Gorky (New York: Grove, 1960), pp. 7-20.

5 Ibid., p. 13.

6 In fact, many propagators of the religious revival among the intelligentsia had been, at one time or another, identified with Marxism and the early Social Democratic movement. See Read, Religion, p. 121.

7 V.S. Miroliubov (1860-1939). Influential literary figure and publisher of the popular *Zhurnal dlya vsekh* (Journal for Everyone), edited and published the works of many new writers. In spite of their imminent break over Miroliubov's mystical drift, the two later partially resumed their collaboration, which continued into the 1920s. The correspondence between Gorky and Miroliubov is published in V. A. Desnitsky, ed., *M. Gor'kii, materialy i issledovaniia,* (*Moskva: Akademiia nauk*, 1941), vol. III, p. 21-102.

8 D.S. Merezhkovsky (1886-1941), author of novels, poetry and literary criticism whose philosophical orientation made him a central figure in Russian Symbolism. Merezhkovsky sought a historical synthesis between the Greek affirmation of physical being and the Christian affirmation of the spiritual being. A key proponent of mystical anarchism among the Russian intelligentsia.

9 Desnitsky, ibid., p. 45 (All translations from Russian, unless otherwise noted, are mine).

10 *M. Gork'kii, Sobranie sochinenii* (*Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo,* 1953), vol. XXIII, p. 325 [hereafter cited as *SS* (1953)].

11 Ibid., p. 326.

12 Ibid.

13 L. Andreev (1871-1919), novelist, dramatist and short story writer. Became one of the best known pre-revolutionary writers. In spite of his reputation for cynicism, Andreev became fervently patriotic during WWI. He opposed the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, and died an exile in Finland.

[14] This term is variously translated as 'philistinism,' the 'bourgeois,' or 'petty-bourgeois mentality,' 'middle-class values,' or even 'Babbitry,' after a character made famous in a novel by the American writer Sinclair Lewis. See also chapter 3 of the present study.

[15] Gorky is referring here to the evolution of Miroliubov, but the same pattern could have as easily been applied to members of the legal Marxist group, which included individuals like N. Berdyaev and S. Bulgakov. The latter had recently been involved with *Problemy Idealizma* (1902), a philosophical anthology which emphasized ethical concerns based on indivdualism.

[16] Peter Yershov, trans. and ed., Letters of Gorky and Andreev 1899-1912 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 50-51.

[17] Ibid., p. 51.

[18] The symbolist poet and novelist Zinaida Gippius (1869-1945) was, as much as her husband Merezhkovsky, at the centre of the mystical/religious trend of Russian literature and philosophy. Using the pseudonyms A. Krainy, or Comrade Herman, her critical articles were often featured in contemporary Russian literary journals before 1917. A determined opponent of Soviet power, she emigrated to Paris following the October Revolution, continuing her literary activities in exile. For the purposes of the brief excursus above on Gippius' critical attitude to Gorky, this paper relies heavily on the article 'Zinaida Gippius as Literary Critic, with Particular Reference to Maksim Gor'kij' by Temira Pachmuss, Canadian Slavonic Papers (Toronto, 1965), vol. VII, pp. 127-142.

[19] Ibid., p. 133.

[20] As quoted by Pachmuss, ibid., p. 131.

[21] As quoted by Pachmuss, ibid., p. 132.

[22] As quoted by Pachmuss, ibid., p. 141.

[23] *M. Gor'kii, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo nauka,* 1968, vol. III., p. 81 [herafter cited as *PSS* (1968)].

[24] In later editions, Gorky sharply condensed this particular speech by Polkanov from *Varen'ka Olesova* (while retaining her laconic reply). The original version (translated above) appeared as a serial in the journal *Severnii vestnik* (Northern Messenger) Nos. 3,4,5 (1898), and is translated here from a supplementary volume to the complete collected works *PSS* (1968), *Varianty*, vol. I, p. 238.

[25] *PSS* (1968), ibid., pp. 86-7.

[26] Gorky, *Chitatel'*, *PSS* (1968), vol. IV, pp. 112-127. For a fuller discussion of this story, in the context of persuasive 'Nietzschean' interpretations of the hero in Gorky's early writings, see Edith Clowes, 'Gorky, Nietzsche and Godbuilding,' and Mary Louise Loe, 'Gorky and Nietzsche: the Quest for a Russian Superman,' in B. Rosenthal, ed., Nietzsche in Russia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 251-273.

[27] *PSS* (1968), ibid., p. 125.

[28] See Chapter 2 of the present study.

[29] As translated in Loe, 'Gorky' (1986), p. 272.

'THE FLAMING HEART'

Transformations of Heroism
In Gorky's Fiction 1892-1900

Gorky made his reputation in the Russian literary public during the 1890s as a writer of short stories. In these works we find reflected through dialogue and character the philosophical, social and moral preoccupations of the young self-educated artist. The gradual evolution of a 'Gorkian' worldview, what Gorky referred to in letters as 'his own truth,' was not a simple or automatic process for the young writer catapulted from obscurity to literary stardom in only a few short years. Gorky's 'own truth,' in fact, was the product of the contradictory social and psychological position which the writer occupied, uniquely, among the social caste of the Russian intelligentsia.

The innovative force which Gorky introduced to Russian audiences in the 1890s was a new conception of the heroic character; the free and untamable wanderer or outcast was the hallmark of the early Gorkian protagonist. Alongside the daredevil, the risk-taker, was another element, which distinguished Gorky from a mere genre-artist, and this was an equally innovative realism, a grimy sense of the hardness of life quite absent from pulp adventure tales, and drawn from the writer's direct experience of life at the margins of society. While myth creation was central to Gorky's early writings, this could not be separated from his entwining of the legendary with the grimly realistic.

The short story was an appropriate medium for this vision for a number of reasons, the first being the provisional and unfixed character of Gorky's own early philosophical views. The short anecdote, epidsodic and incidental narratives of the road, the tale told by a gypsy campfire, and the restless, wandering characters were believable and appropriate bearers of the borrowed, unformed and heterogeneous elements of Gorky's worldview. Deeper characterisation and development of these figures, and the ideas they represented probably remained beyond the framework of the young writer's skills or experience in the early years. Nor did his infatuated reading public appear to clamour for a more expository and consistent view of life from Gorky's work. He gave to the Russian intelligentsia in those years not a philosophy but an attitude, and this was, as Trotsky put it: 'the spirit of daring, the romantic bravery of people who had nothing to lose.'[1]

The philosophy of life which appeared in Gorky's early writings, and written as a 'homeless' truth into the mouths of his individualist heroes was strongly influenced by that of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, which Gorky both reflected and adapted to the peculiarities of the Russian intelligentsia. Central to both the early writings of Gorky and Nietzsche's main works was the theme of the heroic individual and his/her relation to society. It should be noted that Gorky's encounter with Nietzsche's works (primarily *Also sprach Zarathustra*, 'Thus Spake Zarathustra,' 1881) in the late 1880s, or early '90s influenced the young writer's intellectual development. Gorky's own experiences gave him a link to the *brodiaga* (wanderer), or *bosiak* (tramp), a figure whose marginality lent itself to Nietzschean adaptation as an uncompromising individual rebellion against the accepted order. Gorky later admitted to attributing Nietzschean philosophy[2] to these characters, who

populated such stories of that decade as *Makar Chudra* (1892), *Chelkash* (1895), *Mal'va* (1897) and other works.

While Gorky was drawn from his earliest writings to explore and develop the heroic charcter, the particular development of the Gorkian hero later associated with novels such as *Mat'* ('The Mother,' 1906) and with Socialist Realism, was by no means clearly indicated by his first published stories. The theme of an individualistic and willful rejection of human society was, taken by itself, uncoloured by moralism or 'service' to mankind. The hero who applied his strong will for a definite purpose, chosen by himself, whether for good or ill, was of primary concern.

A deliberate parallelism, reflecting Gorky's early interest in the role 'heroic' character in relation to society is to be found in the tales of *Starukha Izergil* (1895). In the first of three tales, Izergil, the old gypsy woman, sees a swirling shadow flying across the steppe as the sky darkens with nightfall. She explains to the young narrator that this shadow is all that remains of Larra, the son of an eagle father and human mother. Long ago the proud and unbending Larra, explains the gypsy, rejected the authority and laws of the tribe, in favour of his own will. After he murdered a young woman who spurned his interest, the elders of the tribe struggled with the question of how to punish Larra most effectively, since it was clear to them that 'in his own eyes he seems to be first on earth.'[3] After considering the most painful possible forms of death, the wisest of the elders suggested that 'his punishment is within himself,' and with this Larra was released to wander outside the society of men, eternally cheated of the death he sought.

The tale of Danko is a mirror image to that of Larra. As Izergil explains to the narrator, the momentary sparks of light which flicker accross the steppe in advence of a storm, are from 'the flaming heart of Danko.' Danko was a young

hero who, recognizing the weakness and fear of his people, took upon himself the responsibility of leading the tribe from the fetid swamp and dark forest in which they had become lost. In order to overcome the weakness and fear of his people, who in their despair were turning against him, at the darkest moment of a terrible storm, Danko tore his own heart from his breast. The flaming heart of Danko shone with such brightness that, by raising it aloft, the young hero was able to lead his people through the darkness into safety before himself collapsing in death.[4]

These two tales of Izergil reflect a dualism in Gorky's own approach to the 'heroic' dimension in his characters. This dualism pits a Nietzschean amorality (understood here as total automony of the individual *vis a vis* the collective) against the 'moralism' which sees the hero voluntarily identifying (and often sacrificing) his own interests with those of the collective. In this way the heroic will performs a dual transformative task: the hero's self-transformation creates the possibility of a collective transformation, enabling the tribe to overcome its own negative attributes.

At this stage of Gorky's activity as a writer, the influence of Nietzsche appears still largely unassimilated. The *Izergil* tales clearly indicate that Gorky identifies the character of Danko with the most positive aspects of heroism, while Larra's pure individualism leads to his perdition. But these two tales were of little interest for Gorky as moral tracts. Rather, it is the impulse of will, rather than its subordination to a moral paradigm, which appears to attract the writer's interest. In both tales, the tribe, or collective, is depicted as a foil to the heroic individual, and against this background the heroic figure, the individual will, defines itself. As if to underline this point, Gorky inserts between the tales of Danko and Larra another story, that of the old woman Izergil herself. Unlike the other narratives, Izergil's story is void of simple

conclusions or formulas--simply the story of a woman's fight for survival in a uniformly hostile and dangerous world, a life which has included prostitution, rape, robbery, and murder. In each tale the old woman appears impartial to the moral aspects of the protagonists, but instead laments the absence of strength in men as she knows them: 'Nowadays I see all kinds of men, but there are no strong ones. Where have they gone?... and the beautiful ones are fewer and fewer.'[5]

While didacticism was not foremost in Gorky's early published works, the writer qualified any embrace of Nietzsche's pure individualism at the same time as he shared the latter's preoccupation with the problem of will. Ambivalence toward unbridled individualism was expressed not only through the eternal torment of Darra (which, for a Nietzschean might also confer a certain promethean nobility), but also through other, less admirable, examples.

One of these is to be found in the early tale *Moi sputnik* ('My Travelling Companion,' 1894), in which the author gives the ostensibly autobiographical account of his travels with Shakro, the 'Georgian Prince.' The author, as a tramp, first admires Shakro from a distance. He is well dressed and handsome but, as the narrator soon learns, has run out of money and has gone without food for three days. Out of admiration and good will, the narrator offers to assist Shakro by travelling with him back to Shakro's home in Tiflis. The relationship which develops between Shakro and Maxim is largely parasitic on the part of Shakro. Gorky employs the device of first-person narration so that the reader is never aware of more about Shakro, than is Maxim himself. Eventually we come to the conclusion that everything that Shakro says about himself is aimed primarily at advancing his own interest.

As the two travel by foot from Crimea to the Caucasus, Shakro consumes everything Maxim can earn from odd jobs, while doing little or no work

himself. When not eating or drinking his companion's provisions, Shakro enunciates a philosophy of pure individualism, which is perfectly consistent with the total amorality of his conduct:

> 'He who is strong is a law unto himself! He has no need of learning; even blind, he'll find his way,' Prince Shakro replied languidly.
>
> Yes, he was always true to himself. This made me feel respect for him; but he was savage and cruel, and occasionally I felt a spark of hatred for Prince Shakro. Still I had not lost all hope of finding some point of contact with him, some common ground on which we could meet and understand one another.[6]

As narrator, Gorky assumes the role of the introspective and conscience-stricken intellectual; his passivity makes him chronically vulnerable to Shakro's uninhibited self-interest and aggressive will. Eventually, this results in a perverse symbiosis in which the author is reduced to complicity in his own exploitation:

> Once in a while I would be struck by the vague thought that Shakro, after all, was only acting within his rights in demanding my help and solicitude for him so boldly and assuredly. In this demand I could see he had real character, real strength. He was enslaving me, and I was submitting, and studying each twitching motion of his physiognomy, trying to make out when and at what point he would stop in the process of exploiting another person's individuality.[7]

The strong will could, it seems, also exert a harmful and exploitative influence on others, an influence which appears as a mirror reflection of the heroic. As Danko would draw on the strength of the collective for its salvation, Shakro could establish a relationship in which his 'fellow traveller's' passive character made him subject to domination and control.

In the first decade of Gorky's literary activity the exploration of this duality was a characteristic theme in his writings. Only gradually did this ambivalence give way to the resolution which was prefigured in *Izergil*: the collective good clearly became the object or purpose of the individual will--permitting expression of this will in the fulfillment of a transformative/heroic

task; the burning heart of Danko conquers the unbending individualism of Larra.

Viewed in this light, the Gorkian transformative hero represents a break with the Nietzschean hero, at the same time as it retains important elements of the latter's apprach-- in a sense 'bending' the individualistic impulse of this hero to serve the collective, while harbouring the conviction that such heroes are nonetheless essential to raise human beings from the fear, stupidity, and even cruelty which typified their normal existence.

But a simple counterposition of two types of hero in *Izergil* would be misleading; in most cases, the attitude of Gorky to his characters in these early stories was one of relative ambivalence. Variants on the theme of Nietzschean individualism appear in at least two types of characters, who populate different stories, and serve various purposes.

In the first of these categories is the thief, the drunkard, the often desparate *byvshii chelovek* (former person) who skulks at the outskirts of human society, as an object of both pity and fear. Typical of these are Shakro in *Moi sputnik, Druzhki* ('Buddies,' 1898), *Chelkash* (1895), the vagrants in *Delo c zatezhkami* ('The Affair with the Clasps,' 1895). In the second we find the strong and free spirit, who refuses to bow before the idols of external authority. Typically these heroes are physically and spiritually powerful and striking in appearance. Like Larra they may also be brutal and unfeeling, but nonetheless admirable as representatives of indomitable will (Artyom in *Cain i Artyom* (1899), Loyko and Radda in *Makar Chudra.* (1895), and the title character in *Mal'va*).

If the isolated individual has a dualistic aspect, the same is certainly true of the collective, be it tribe, village or other form of community. Gorky did not resolve this conflict without also exploring the repugnant aspects of the 'collective' through the eyes of the individual. In the story *Skukt radi* ('Out of

Boredom,'1897).[8] Gorky presents the claustrophobic stagnation of small community around a remote railway station in the middle of the steppe. The people at the station inhabit a microcosmic universe of vice and gratuitous cruelty, which, for want of external enemies or compulsions, they direct against each other. Eventually their vindictive sport drives the homely and miserable cook, Arina, to suicide, after she has sought a pitiful solace in the sexual attentions of another lowly station worker.

In *Skukt Radi* we see none of the later Gorky's effort (under social-democratic influence) to identify the source of human misery and cruelty with an oppressive or unjust social order.[9] The people of the station victimise one another, with the heaviest burden of abuse carried by the poorest and weakest, merely on account of being gathered in a single place. The inhumanity of life for the characters is not a product of ignorance; the educated are as despicable as any. As the title suggests, this isolated world is poisoned by its own empty sameness, its deadening routinism. This theme also relates depictions of the life and attitudes of the Russian peasant in his tie to the land,[10] and was a frequent motif of Gorky's writing. The life of the collective, untransformed by any heroic dimension, is without joy or hope of any kind.

In *Dvadtsat' shest' i odna* ('Twenty-Six Men and a Girl,' 1898), another variant of the individual hero and the collective is explored throught the relationship of the 'twenty six' workers, who slave in a hellish underground bakery, and the young girl Tanya. In this story, Gorky's focus moves from the indivdual to the transformation of the collective. The transformation of the 'twenty-six' from the oppressed condition of 'living machines' to that of human beings is achieved not through the intervention of a strong-willed hero, but the mere existence of the young servant girl, who occasionally comes down from the

dressmakers' shop above the bakery to cajol a few pretzels from the 'prisoners.' The narrator is also a collective voice, speaking for all:

> We loved her, and that says it all. Man's love must always find someone to be its object, even though he sometimes crushes, sometimes sullies with it. He can sometimes poison the one close to him with his love, because in loving he does not respect the beloved. We were bound to love Tanya, for we had no one else to love.
>
> Now and then someone of us would suddenly start reasoning as follows:
>
> 'What are we making such a fuss over this girlie for, eh? What's so special about her? We make such a big deal out of her!'
>
> On the man who dared to utter such speeches we would come down hard and fast. We had to have something to love. We had found it and we loved it. And what the twenty-six of us loved had to be for each of us unshakable, as our holy object, and anyone who went against us on this -- that man was our enemy.[11]

Eventually, the tension between Tanya and the workers, who have made her the unconscious vessel of their own longings and ideals, is snapped. The only strong will in this case operates as the agent of destruction for the illusion that the twenty six have created for themselves in Tanya. A handsome and well-dressed 'soldier' eventually seduces the girl, shattering the projected 'holy object' before the eyes of the worshippers. This drives the miserable workers to turn in violent anger, not on the soldier, but on Tanya. In response, her earlier sympathy for the 'poor prisoners' is instantly transformed into cold contempt.

Dvadtsat' shest' i odna is rightly considered a high point among Gorky's early stories, perhaps because it weaves together so many threads familiar from earlier works in a pattern which is both unexpected and resistant to definitive interpretation. The collective emerges as both positive and negative force, the 'prisoners'' love has a positive quality in lifting some of the monotony of their exploitation, but at the same time it 'crushes' and 'sullies' Tanya herself as its object.

The young girl is attacked by the workers for having proven unworthy of a faith which she neither sought not desired, and they themselves have been complicit in bringing about her seduction by the soldier. Nonetheless, it is

Tanya who retains her dignity at the end of the story and the workers are left with nothing except, presumably, a deeper cynicism. The love they had felt toward Tanya was, after all, tinged with a selfish dependency on illusion: *'...liubya, ne uvazhaet liubimogo'* (loving, but not respecting the beloved).12

As an anti-hero, the soldier also resists simple characterization. Seen through the eyes of the narrator, he has many attributes of a positive hero, including beauty, physical strength, will. Like Tanya, he is friendly, treating the bakery workers as human beings, and excites in them a similar passive admiration. Only gradually does the reader become aware of the soldier's demonic and infernal qualities, his 'twitching moustaches' (*usy shevelilis'*) and his habit of frequently 'licking his lips' (*oblizyval guby*).

The reader is left with a feeling of hopelessness for the collective narrator of the story. On one hand, a certain social-democratic influence on Gorky is apparent; the twenty-six are viciously exploited in a way that helps to account for their misery and dehumanisation. On the other hand, Gorky at no point attempts to underline their status as workers in order to point the way to their liberation. Instead, this oppression seems to be without material remedy; until another force will appear, these men are passive victims of their own illusions.

In this sense, the strength of *Dvadtsat' shest' i odna* is the fact that it is constructed around a vacuum. The absence of a protagonist, or even an omniscient author to assume some 'responsibility' for the pointless and unremarkable tragedy which is unfolding. The consciousness of the narrator comprehends nothing outside the consciousness of the collective, which acts only 'like a flock of sheep' *(kak stado baranov)* unable to influence events on its own behalf. When its misdirected hopes are revealed as illusions, the collective reacts only with uncontrolled violence and anger.

From the period of these early works throughout his career as a writer Gorky retained an ambivalence toward the collective. Its constant necessary concessions and compromises with quotidian venality--and its clear need of salvation from itself--made it by turns the source and object of both the highest and the lowest of human impulses. This ambivalence created a complementary dynamic for the role of the positive hero. The possibility of finding a 'new life' for both the individual and the collective was precariously balanced against the destructive potentialities of both.

What did emerge from the decade from 1890 to 1900, aside from Gorky's dazzling rise to public prominence, was a series of initial resolutions to the conflicts posed by his first published writings.

The drama *Na Dne* (Lower Depths, 1902), widely regarded as one of Gorky's most successful litrerary works, is a striking evidence of the shift in Gorky's worldview. Although the play is often is often cited for its explicit treatment of Nietzschean themes, there is good reason to see it at the same time as a final repudiation on Gorky's part, of the Nietzschean transformative hero.

The play is loosely structured, and revolves around the dead-end lives of the tramps, thieves and prostitutes who inhabit the basement of a grimy flop-house. The character of the good-hearted old man Luka, whose pity for others prompts him to falsify and prettify reality to comfort them, raises the key philosophical question of the work: that of man's relation to truth. The vagabond Satin at one point passes a purely Nietzschean judgement on the benign falsehoods by which Luka helps both himself and those around him to live: 'A lie is the religion of slaves and masters. The truth is the God of free people.'[13] At the same time, however, *Na dne* expresses the impossibility of reconciling this absolutism with a humanistic worldview. Neither Satin, nor any other character in the play has any place, after all, in the category of

'freedom.'[14] Their misery and desperation identify them primarily as victims, rather than seekers after truth.

The exception to this rule, Luka, who appears to wander in search of a true religion, is the one character most closely identified with his reliance on consoling lies. Luka is capable of inspiring others, through his words and example, to struggle for 'something better' (in this way also he is reminiscent of earlier heroes). But the efforts of Pepel' and the Actor to overcome their alchoholic cynicism end only in even greater tragedies. The Actor hangs himself, while Pepel' is framed for the murder of the landlord Kostylev. The play ends as it began, surveying the human wreckage of the flop-house; no escape from life's misery has been possible except through death.

In this respect, *Na dne* brings to a natural synthesis certain key elements of Gorky's work from the previous decade. To his intelligentsia audiences, Gorky presented the familiar cast of *byvshie liudi*, and from their mouths came familiar philosophical speeches about 'truth' and 'freedom.' But these characters, unlike a Chelkash or a Mal'va, have not the slightest illusion of freedom themselves. They may wander to the next flop-house, but their fundamental conditions of life are not susceptible to transformation from within. From this point of view the value of facing a life unclothed by illusion, a proof of strength so prized by the Nietzscheans, appears somewhat empty:

> BUBNOV: Hmm. Take me for example-- I'm a poor liar. Why lie? The way I see it, go ahead and speak the whole truth. What good does it do to hide it?
> KLESHCH: Truth? What truth? *(tearing at the rags which cover him)* Here's the truth! No work. No strength. That's the truth! No shelter! Not even a roof to call my own! Nothing left but to die like a dog! That's your truth, devil take it! What do I want with your truth?...[15]

These words from the impoverished lock-smith Kleshch might be an appropriate epitaph for the tramp-hero, whose character never reappeared in Gorky's fiction--at least not in his original form. If Gorky was unable to

abandon his quest for a transformatiove heroic figure, he was nonetheless aware that such a figure would not be found by romanticising the lost souls at the margins of Russian society.

By the time Gorky had published the story-dialogue *Chitatel'* ('The Reader,' 1897),[16] the writer had embraced a conception of the positive individual heroism with the conscious pursuit of the collective good as its goal. Further, Gorky had elaborated a vision which made the relationship between individual and collective a dynamic one, involving the collective in its own transformation, sparked by the strong will of the individual hero. With *Chitatel'*, Gorky makes explicit a link between the positive individual hero and the writer-*intelligent*,[17] between art and life. *Na Dne* in turn, marks the final dissociation from the tramp-hero which no longer reflected the writer's experience or perception. In this sense, we can identify a shift in Gorky's worldview which would dominate much of the writer's work, as well as his partisan political activity, for the following decade.

The evolution in Gorky's conception of the positive hero was certainly not the only dimension of his creative development betweeen 1890 and 1900. Its importance is directly connected with the writer's growing interest in the political struggles in Russia, and his rejection of the detached idealism which in his eyes characterised the Russian intelligentsia. These impulses, in turn, brought him toward active partisanship in the social democratic cause. The emergence of the writer as myth-creator, absorbed in realising the responsibility toward his tribe which he ascribed to his transformative-heroic characters, was to define Gorky's place both in the literary sphere and in the revolutionary movement. But in order to explain this phenomenon (and to shed light on the aspects of heroic myth-creation represented by subsequent phases in the writer's development, including god-building and later, Socialist

Realism), we must examine Gorky's further evolution as a writer and literary activist.

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[1] Trotsky in Portraits, Personal and Political, George Breitman, George Saunders, ed. (New York: Pathfinder, 1977), p. 160.

[2] Mary Louise Loe, 'Gorky' (1986), p. 256.

[3] *PSS* (1968), vol. I, p. 80.

[4] Ibid., p. 91-96.

[5] Ibid., p. 97.

[6] *PSS* (1968),vol. I, p. 127-128.

[7] Ibid., p. 130.

[8] *PSS* (1968), vol. IV, p. 7-24.

[9] The theme of mindless and gratuitous cruelty among groups of prisoners, thieves, and peasants figures prominently in many of Gorky's early stories; typical examples include *Zazubrina* (1897). Another variant of this theme is the cruelty of peasants, townsfolk and other 'settled' groups, aimed against the *bosiaki*, etc., as in *Druzhki* (1898), or the opinion of the peasants expressed by Sereja, the cynical but intelligent fisherman in *Mal'va.* (1898).

[10] See, for example the discussions between the thief and the peasant youth in *Chelkash.*

[11] *PSS* (1968), vol. V, p. 11-12.

[12] Ibid. p. 11.

[13] *PSS* (1968), vol. VII, p. 173

[14] For a comprehensive and illuminating discussion of the relation between the characters and philosophical themes of *Na dne*, see Raimund Sesterhenn *Das Bogostroitel'stvo bei Gor'kij und Lunacarskij bis 1909 (Muenchen: Verlag Otto Segner, 1982)*, pp. 174-181.

[15] *PSS* (1968), vol. VII, p. 152.

[16] See Chapter I of the present study.

[17] Recent Gorky scholarship in the West, particularly the work of Mary Louise Loe (1986) on the relationship between Gorky and Nietzsche, identifies this shift as a replacement of the *bosiak* for the *intelligent* as Gorky's model of the hero. However, it would be more accurate to identify Gorky's turn toward the intelligentsia as occurring simultaneously with his abandonment of the Nietzschean amoral individualist in favour of the heroic individual who seeks to transform, rather than merely reject, social reality.

THE BREAKING STORM

The Intelligentsia and the 1905 Revolution in Gorky's Publicistic and Dramatic Writings

The year 1905 was barely a week old before the events of January 9, also known as 'Bloody Sunday' sparked the great 'dress rehearsal' for 1917. The evening before the mass demonstration of Petersburg workers, Gorky took part in a delegation of writers and scientists to ministers K. N. Rydzevsky and S. Yu. Witte demanding that measures be taken by the government to avoid bloodshed[1]. On the following 'damned but instructive day' Gorky was to witness the events as a participant in the demonstration, marching in a contingent with Bolsheviks from Nizhny-Novgorod who raised the first red banner in the demonstration.[2]

In a letter written to his wife after the demonstration, Gorky included a detailed description of the horrific events he had witnessed. The letter ends with the following unexplained afterthought: 'Show this to V[asily] A[lekseevich Desnitsky] -- tell him that the future historian of the oncoming revolution will probably begin his work with a phrase like: "The first day of the Russian revolution was the day of the Russian intelligentsia's moral collapse"--that is my impression from their conduct and speeches.'[3]

These words point toward the imminent full-scale war between Gorky and the literary intelligentsia. The majority of the Russian literary caste did

indeed react to the events of 1905-06 in a way that sharpened the conflicts which previously characterised the relationship between the writer and his most influential public. The consolidation of a certain proletarian class partisanship in Gorky's works coincided with the height of Gorky's unpopularity with the literary circles of Moscow and Petersburg. This initiated a distinct period, the most troubled in the development of Gorky's difficult relationship with the intelligentsia. It was only with the publication of the single novel (identified most closely with the 'god-building' movement), *Ispoved'* ('A Confession,' 1908), that a truce was marked in the combat, beginning a reconciliation which was to remain in effect more or less permanently after 1909.

A few days after the massacre, Gorky was arrested by the police and imprisoned in the infamous Peter and Paul Fortress in Petersburg. The detention of such a well known literary figure raised an international outcry which prompted his release one month later by the now-jittery tsarist authorities.

The year 1905 was spent by Gorky travelling between Petersburg and Moscow, usually continuing north or south to Riga or Finland and Yalta; for reasons of health he needed relief from the tumultuous events which were shaking the major cities. Over this time he produced a series of articles in support of the uprising and raised considerable funds for the Bolshevik faction of the RSDLP.[4] In spite of the gradual consolidation of Gorky's support for Lenin's organization, as expressed through his fundraising activity, Gorky was not exclusive in his inclination toward the Bolsheviks during the year 1905.[5] His participation in a delegation of liberals on the eve of the January demonstration, his sheltering of Father Gapon,[6] the priest (later unmasked as a police agent) who had led the workers' protest, were unlikely to have been

greeted with approval by the Bolshevik leadership. At the same time, Gorky's value as a public figure well-disposed toward Lenin's faction made it difficult for anyone in the party to criticise the writer's freelance activity. All the more so as he was not a member of the party, nor bound by its discipline in any way. Furthermore, Gorky's lack of party-mindedness was more than compensated for by his invaluable literary assistance to the Bolsheviks, which included help in setting up the first legal Bolshevik newspaper *Novaia zhiz'n* in October, and the publication of a series of books by Marx, Engels, Lafarge and Bebel.[7]

After the events of January 9, the consciousness of the masses inside Russia underwent a dramatic change. As Trotsky wrote within weeks of the massacre: 'The Revolution has come! With one move she has lifted the people over scores of steps, up which in times of peace we would have had to drag ourselves with hardship and fatigue.'[8]

Throughout 1905 mass political strikes swept through Moscow and other Russian cities, Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic region, Finland and the Caucasus. Soldiers revolted in the garrisons at Vladivostok, Tiflis, Tashkent, and Warsaw. On board the Black Sea battleship *Potemkin* a protest by sailors over living conditions was transformed into a full-scale mutiny.

In the first months of swelling discontent the tsarist regime appeared helpless. In March and April, the Emperor wavered between increasingly ineffective repression and small concessions to popular representation in the form of receiving hand-picked 'delegations' of workers and peasants, and establishing the so-called 'Bulygin Duma.' As the protests spread, however, Count Witte prevailed on the Tsar to accept the idea of a council, or Duma, to be elected by popular sufferage. The October Manifesto, which set out this comprimise was released as the situation in the cities was reaching a climax, with the formation of the first workers soviets in the capital, and barricades

being erected in the factory suburbs of Moscow. In a letter dated October 24, Gorky referred to the Tsar's Duma proclamation as a 'trashy little manifesto' (*driannen'kim manifestikom*), at the same time adding: 'It has its value; but one mustn't exaggerate it.'[9]

Gorky's ambivalence regarding the October Manifesto here was not shared by the author's former admirers in the liberal intelligentsia and professional layers. This traditional base of 'democratic' opinion had long identified itself with 'the people,' but responded with deep misgivings to the revolution as it moved into the streets. Seeing the Manifesto as a step toward constitutional monarchy, and alarmed at the breakdown of public order, the small and timorous capitalist class in Russia along with its intellectual and literary fellow-travellers were quick to embrace the spirit of compromise with the autocracy.

Meanwhile, the insurrectionary wave had not yet crested among the urban workers, and the peasant revolt in the countryside would continue sporadically up to 1907. As 1905 drew to a close, however, the Petersburg soviet and its leaders were placed under arrest by the police. Although even larger protest strikes followed, this action marked the beginning of a period of anti-revolutionary reprisal against the mass movement which was to reverse the balance of forces decisively for years to come. In this context, the October Manifesto was ultimately effective in dividing opponents of the autocracy sufficiently for the defenders of law and order to regroup their own forces, helping to prolong the regime's existence for another decade.

The first months of 1906 were spent by Gorky touring Europe, addressing large gatherings for the purpose of raising funds for the revolutionary movement on behalf of the Bolsheviks. The latter also suggested to Gorky the possibility of extending the tour to North America, where even greater political

and financial support for the Bolsheviks might be raised while the events in Russia were still fresh in the mind of the American public.

Gorky's six-month stay in North America did not achieve the intended results. First, the writer's arrival in New York was attended by scandal over his relationship to his travelling companion M. F. Andreeva. The fact Gorky was more or less openly cohabiting with Andreeva, while his lawful spouse, E. Peshkova, remained in Russia with their child, was judged by Gorky's American public on a different moral yardstick than that used by the bulk of Gorky's Russian and European readers. A press campaign, orchestrated with the help of the Russian Embassy in New York and the Hearst newspaper empire, denounced Gorky for offending public morals. Virtually overnight, the famous writer became too controversial for 'polite' American society.

On a political level it was also clear to Gorky that many Americans, like Russian liberals, greeted the prospect of the Duma elections with satisfaction, and would not be particularly receptive to Gorky's more radical positions.[10] With hopes for a successful tour thwarted, Gorky and Andreeva were offered refuge at the Adirondack home of a wealthy admirer, and there Gorky resumed his writing activity in relative seclusion for the better part of the spring and summer of 1906.

During this period Gorky was of course out of the direct line of fire, both literally and metaphorically. As the revolutionary fires diminished in Russia, however, Gorky's hostility to the 'bourgeois mentality' and its reflection in the intelligentsia only became more intense. During his stay in America, the writer produced both the novel *Mat'* ('The Mother'), the play *Vragi* ('Enemies'), as well as a number of belligerent publicistic works.[11]

The autumn of 1906 saw Gorky's return to Europe, where he settled on the Italian island of Capri. Return to Russia was impossible due to the anti-

government activity Gorky had conducted abroad, and charges which remained outstanding from his participation in the disturbances of 1905. Capri afforded Gorky a much-needed refuge, and was to be the centre of his literary and political activities for the next seven years.

As the letter of January 9 indicated, the events of 1905 were to sharpen rather than diminish Gorky's exasperation with the intellectual milieu of many of his literary colleagues. As gentry houses went up in the flames of peasant rebellion in the countryside, and shots were traded over barricades in Moscow, Gorky launched a literary broadside against the petit-bourgeois philistinism of the intellectuals *Zametki o meshchanstve* ('Notes in the Bourgeois Mentality,' 1905) [12] an essay published serially in the first issues of the Bolshevik newspaper *Novaya zhizn"*.[13]

The explicit target of *Zametki* was not particularly controversial. Since Herzen's day, progressive intellectuals had identified *'meshchanstvo'*, or the bourgeois mentality, as a danger to be countered by the forces of enlightenment and social progress. In this article, Gorky's radical departure from this tradition is to proclaim his opinion that the mainstream values and the role of the intelligentsia were themselves identical with *meshchanstvo*. To Gorky, the self-absorbed, complacent and anti-democratic tendencies of the Russian intelligentsia revealed themselves most clearly in the irreconcilable conflict between 'the people' and the ruling classes. The author portrays in very broad strokes a long and shameful history of this 'philistinism'[14] and its consistency in acting as an instrument of the oppressive order.

Turning to the example of Russia, Gorky catalogued the various tendencies of *meshchanstvo* in literary history, including thinly veiled references to populism, Russophilia and the characteristic intellectual worship

of peasant life, as presented in idealised, naturalistic terms, and emphasising the passivity, fatalism and humility of the oppressed. In Gorky's words, 'of all the literatures of the world, only Russian literature has given such a saccharine portrayal of its people and has described their sufferings with such odd and questionable relish.'

To avoid having his allusions interpreted as mere sniping at charlatans on the margins of literary society, the author took direct aim at the two most revered icons in the church of Russian literature, Tolstoy[15] and Dostoevsky. In his struggle to win the conscience of the Russian intelligentsia to the side of the unfolding revolution, the polemicist was obliged to confront these two giants, identified with the slogans *terpi!* (forbear, endure), *samosovershenstvuisia!* (seek self-perfection), and *ne protiv'sia zlu nasiliem!* (resist not evil with violence). He accepts the challenge on the same moral ground as his competitors:

> There is something overwhelming, ugly and shameful, there is something like a cruel joke in these preachments of forbearance and non-resistance to evil. Two world geniuses, after all, lived in a country where violence over people had already reached proportions which surpasses its own passionate cynicism... .
> This difficult example most clearly illuminates the true character of the attitude of Russian literature toward the people. All of our literature consists of persistent instruction on a passive relationship to life, an apologia for passivity. And this is to be expected.
> The literature of the bourgois philistines *(meshchan)* can be no different, even when the bourgeois artist *(meshchanin-khudozhnik)* is a genius.[16]

While explicitly turning from direct reference to Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Gorky continues the attack on the 'writer-philistine' in general:

> They want to reconcile the tortured with the torturer and they want to justify their closeness to the torturer, and their impassivity toward the suffering of the world. They give the tortured lessons in forbearance, and convince them not to resist violence, they always look for proofs of the impossibility of changing relations between the haves and the have-nots, they promise the people reward for their labour and suffering in heaven, while admiring their unbearably hard life on earth, they suck the living juices from the people like aphids. The majority of them serve violence directly, the minority, indirectly, with preachments of forbearance, reconciliation, forgiveness, justification.[17]

This attack, while consistent with Gorky's private views as expressed in letters, flew directly (and publicly) in the face of the traditional self-perception of the liberal intelligentsia, which viewed itself above the 'class egotisms' of other social forces, and thus uniquely capable of identifying the common good.[18] Similarly unacceptable was Gorky's emphasis on the role of the oppressed, via collective social-democratic consciousness, as the protagonists of their own struggle, and the true agents of the common good.

Following the publication of *Zametki* in the Bolshevik press, Gorky came under counter-attack from prominent intellectuals, including Berdyaev, and symbolist poet and critic N. Minsky.[19] In this sense the article can be considered the first blow in the post-1905 debate over the intelligentsia and its role which was to be profoundly influential, particularly among ideologists of the conservative emigration after 1917.

Within Gorky's thought itself, however, we encounter a familiar contradiction, little remarked upon by either side in the contemporary intlellectual skirmishes, but useful to a discussion of Gorky's real attitude to the intelligentsia he was so vigorously denouncing.

Like much of Gorky's publicistic writing of this period *Zametki* displays a polemical, often virulent style. The reader is assaulted with vague, repetitive and rambling passages, which reveal little in the way of analysis or editorial discipline on the author's part. On closer inspection, the visceral nature of the writing reveals a deeply emotional engagement which necessarily rejects 'art' altogether, counterposing to it the political struggle for truth, justice, and freedom. At the heart of this counterposition we find the expression of Gorky's own persistant, unresolved ambivalence toward his subject, the literary intelligentsia and the values it represented.

The first evidence of the contradiction in Gorky's position is his adamant refusal to ascribe to the intelligentsia any identity separate from that of the exploiting class. Literature itself is reduced exclusively to the status of a weapon in the class struggle. The intelligentsia is also shown to be, whatever its subjective intentions, exclusively the blind instrument of class forces inimical to human freedom. In spite of this schema, Gorky is able to concede an exception, in the form of individuals genuinely embracing *'proletarskaya nauka'* (proletarian science), and capable of heroic sacrifice for the cause of the people, which makes nonsense of the rule.[20] Gorky's thesis is also negated fundamentally by the very orientation of *Zametki*, which expressed both his disgust with the intelligentsia for failing to rally to side of the revolution, and his hope of convincing this same intelligentsia, through moral suasion, of the error of its ways. Underlying Gorky's crudely deterministic assertions regarding the mechanical complicity of the intelligentsia was the mirror image of his voluntarism. In this respect Gorky had the profound faith of an idealist: that intellectuals determine their social position not through vulgar class egotism, but through their capacity for autonomous moral reasoning, and for comprehension of the 'common good.' On this contradiction hinges the author's fundamental relationship with the literary intelligentsia who, in spite of their automatic *(inoi ne mozhet byt')* [21] complicity with the powers that be, remain the intended audience for virtually all of Gorky's moral sermons. Without this touching faith in the true calling of the intelligentsia, and the moral imperative which went with it, the entire course of Gorky's life as a literary activist would be difficult, if not impossible to explain.

The ambivalence on Gorky's part is perhaps best illustrated by the literary work which the writer was producing during the period immediately surrounding the 1905 upheavals. For this purpose it is particularly valuable to

examine the writer's growing interest in the medium of the drama during this period. Not only did Gorky write four separate plays spaced over the years 1904 to 1906, but chose in the theatrical stage the most appropriate possible medium for connecting with the specific audience he sought to address.

DRAMAS, 1902-06

As Gorky waged a war for the souls of his intelligentsia opponents in articles and other publicistic writings, his fiction grappled with the problem of defining a positive role for his tribe in the revolutionary movement. While he had recognised earlier that the revolution had no place for wanderers on the margins of society, or heroic but politically insignificant Nietzschean individualists, the writer faced the problem of creating heroic figures who could also play a historically credible part in the revolutionary struggle. By definition such figures had to be workers. The role of intelligentsia in the proletarian revolution could be positive, but only in an auxiliary capacity, and only through a decisive rejection of its traditional identity, attributes, and functions within the old order.

An important vehicle for the development of Gorky's new intelligentsia characters was a series of dramatic works which followed upon the tremendous public success of *Na dne* ('Lower Depths') in 1902. As a result of the earlier success of this work Gorky was in a strong position to express his philosophical and social views through the theatre in 1905.

Gorky's next major dramatic efforts were written against the backdrop of a quickening pace of political developments in Russia. *Dachniki* ('Summerfolk') was staged at the end of 1904, and quickly followed by *Deti solntsa* ('Children of the Sun,' 1905), *Varvary* ('Barbarians,' 1906) and *Vragi* ('Enemies,' 1906). In contrast to *Na dne*, all the works in this cycle deal directly with the lives of the

intelligentsia. This allows them to be studied as a partial reflection of their author' attitude to his adopted caste, both as subject and as audience, during a key period of his development as a writer.

As in the publicistic works of the period, Gorky was chiefly preoccupied in these dramas with the problem of *meshchanstvo* and the intelligentsia. Forsaking the tendentious and artless polemicism of *Zametki*, however, Gorky uses these works to draw some compelling characters and situations, in a way which distinguishes them from mere sermonizing on stage. In these works, Gorky the playwright encounters a problem which was to plague him in all his subsequent efforts in this vein: developing a new type of hero (intelligentsia or proletarian revolutionary) both artistically convincing, and yet with the heroic capacity to lead his tribe from the swamp of despair and cynicism.

The plays of the 1904-06 period are populated primarily by a character new to Russian literature and society, the class of self-made professionals and businessmen who rose to relative affluence in the last decade of the previous century, just as the fortunes of the landed gentry were slipping into irreversible decline.

In their dynamism, many of these characters share attributes with the small-town *kuptsy* (merchants) and entrepreneurs who inhabit the world of *Foma Gordeev* (1899), and the later play *Vassa Zheleznova* (1910). But rather than being driven in pursuit of ultimate self-destruction and unhappiness by an iron will and determination, as are the provincial merchant patriarchs, these urbane and cultured *meshchane* seem complacent with a modest security already attained. They have lost the will which might have animated them when they were still struggling for advancement. What remains is a raw and impenetrable cynicism seeking to dissipate itself in sexual adventures, idle wit, aimless introspection or petty cruelties.

On the reverse side of this world lies a deep dissatisfaction, despair and longing. Very few of the characters have any chance of liberating themselves from their miserable lives. Gorky expresses the aspiration toward something better primarily through female characters, who for the most part have the least power to change life, but at the same time see its reality most clearly. In this sense, the plays rely for much of their dramatic impact on the very absence of heroic figures, which leaves the characters, good and bad, for the most part trapped in a claustrophobic unhappiness through their own connivance.

In the first of the plays, Gorky develops the image of the *dachniki*, the summer cottage crowd of upwardly mobile and trivial-minded urban *meshchane* who unselfconsciously litter the landscape of life. In the words of the caretaker Pustobaika:

> Ah, more of their litter, the devils. Like Sunday strollers they are, this cottage crowd...come along, litter the place up, and off they go. All they leave you is the picking up and the sweeping up....[22]

In fact, however, it is clear that this little vacation colony is not all of a piece. A series of small events, sexual scandals and family crises gradually divides the cynics, the complacent, from those with the spark of human decency. The central problem of the plays is expressed by the character Maria L'vovna in the fourth act of *Dachniki* :

> We are the children of cooks and washerwomen and honest working people--we must be different! Our country has never before had an educated people with direct blood ties to the masses--surely this blood relationship should have nurtured in us a burning desire to stretch out, to rebuild, to bring some enlightenment and significance to the lives of our own people, who live out their days in hard work, choking in darkness and filth.[23]

From the other side, a somewhat different interpretation of this reality is later offered by the cynical engineer Suslov:

> What I want to say to you, most-honoured Maria L'vovna, is that if we don't all live exactly as you want us to, we have our reasons for it. All of us here had quite enough suffering and hunger in our youth. It's only natural that now, in our maturity, we want to eat well and drink and enjoy a bit of

leisure--if only to compensate for those hard and hungry days when we were young....

Yes! All of us here, we're all the children of poor people. We all know... I mean I know, what hunger feels like, what insecurity feels like. We want to eat well, to take things easy in our mature years. That's our psychology. You may not like it, Maria L'vovna, but it's perfectly natural and there's nothing you can do about it. First and foremost comes man, most honoured Maria L'vovna, after that it's all nonsense...so please, leave us in peace![24]

As it becomes clear that these two views of life are irreconcilable, the weak male character, Riumin, who is unable to bridge this divide or to chose one side over the other eventually shoots himself in despair--but not fatally. As he is carried from the stage he aptly and ruefully remarks: 'Yes, well, there you have it. I've been a failure at living, and now I've made a hash of dying--what a pathetic person!'[25]

As a result of the attempted suicide, the microcosmic community undergoes a final schism which saves some from the fatal misery of *meshchanstvo*, enabling them to find love and escape the fate of their venal counterparts. In the last scene, Gorky leaves the cynical and hollow 'writer' Shalimov on the stage to pass judgment. In the language of his own class, Shalimov unconsciously reiterates the thought expressed earlier by the plebeian caretaker Pustobaika: 'None of it has any significance whatever, old chap; neither the people nor the events. Pour me a drop of wine, would you? Yes, its all quite unimportant you know, old chap.'[26]

Reflecting Gorky's reaction to the events of 1905, the two plays written over the following year, *Deti solntsa* and *Varvary*, paint a picture of the intelligentsia which is even bleaker than that of *Dachniki*. Once again, it is primarily the female characters which express both the basic human need for love and the impulse toward a better life, while male characters are, for the most part, either unwilling or too weak-willed to confront (or even to feel) the emptiness of their existence. In both the later plays, however, the schism which rescues the humane and idealistic impulses of the minority from

contamination by the poisonous complacency of *meshchanstvo* fails to take place. The inchoate protest finds its outlet only in overheated emotionality, unrequited and impossible passions, 'nervous' illnesses, and suicide.

In both *Deti solntsa*, and *Varvary*, Gorky takes pains to distinguish his characters from the *lishnye liudi* (superfluous men) of nineteenth century Russian literature. Instead of permanently dreaming, Oblomov style, of achieving something in life, the men of these dramas are generally immersed in their 'professional capacities' as doctors, lawyers, engineers, to the detriment of real contact with the world around them, often escaping from life precisely in the pursuit of 'socially useful' activities (*Varvary*, for example, deals not with the scandals of idle holiday makers, but with a party of professionals engaged in surveying a railway line through a sleepy rural town). At the same time, these two plays display the deepest pessimism on Gorky's part for the fate of the intelligentsia.

Deti Solnsta depicts the world of a provincial intelligentsia family in decline. The absent-minded chemist Protasov is thoroughly absorbed in his experiments, while his wife pursues an affair with a painter, Vagin. The inability of these characters to take control over or responsibility for their lives is mirrored by the world beyond, which seems to be crumbling around them. Protasov's sister Liza appears to swing between morbid dread of life and genuine compassion for others. She is unable to reciprocate the love offered by the veterinary surgeon, Chepurnoy, who subsequently hangs himself. The wealthy young widow Melanya, meanwhile, suffers intensely for love of the oblivious Protasov.

Melanya's character is full of passion for a better life, represented for her by the scentific dedication of Protasov. She is uneducated, and deeply troubled over the fact that she married for wealth, a fact that makes her need for love all

the more intense. Gorky attempts through this character to express the yearning of the masses for the cultural enlightenment enjoyed by the few.

Protasov is able to speak with intense passion and conviction of the future; at the same time his speeches burst forth in clouds of eloquent vagueness, and without immediate purpose:

> Once upon a time, an insignificant, unformed bit of albumen was touched by a ray of the sun, it multiplied, it took on the form of -- an eagle, a lion, and a human being! The time will come when, from us, from people, from all people a magnificent and beautiful organism will appear: humanity! Humanity, my friends! At that time, every cell of humanity will have a past filled with grand achievements of thought... our work!...
>
> But we are people, children of the sun, the bright source of every living thing! Born of the sun, we will conquer the gloomy fear of death! We are children of the sun! That is what burns in our blood, that is what generates the proud, bright thoughts which dispel the gloom of our incomprehension!...[27]

Protasov's beautiful thoughts, contrasted to his befuddled disinterest in real life, gradually appear as blind and self-centered. The destructive results of his inability to deal with life are clearly an indictment of the same characteristics Gorky observed in the intelligentsia as a whole.

At the same time, the playwright reserves a sense of pity for these lost 'children,' and foreboding at the world which is closing in on them. The looming catastrophe is symbolised by the outbreak of a cholera epidemic in the town, and the hysteria of a mob which descends on Protasov's laboratory in the belief that he is somehow generating the disease.

The title *Varvary* suggests a less sympathetic attitude to its subject. Although ostensibly representing everything sophisticated and advanced in Russian society, the urbane engineer Cherkun and his party wreak a terrible devastation on the small town on which they have descended to survey a new rail line. The play's action centres on the unrequited passion of a local woman, Nadezhda, for Cherkun, against a double backdrop of the worldly troupe of urban visitors, and the claustrophobic narrowness of the town. The play

concludes with Nadezhda's suicide, as she realizes the impossibility of returning to the confines of her marriage, just as the better world she has grasped for has turned out to be an illusion.

Clearly the sexual frivolity of the outsiders indicates the gulf which separates the staid, traditional vulgarity of the local dignitaries from the corrosive *meshchanstvo* of the outsiders, a cynicism which is all-consuming, even cataclysmic in its effect. The confusion and misery brought by the new 'barabarism' is thus linked not to a decaying old order, but to the dynamic transformations by which these representatives of the intelligentsia are helping to drag Russia into the new century -- precipitating not hopeful evolution, but the violent and fatal collision of different worlds.

The hopelessness of the situation for the intelligentsia, as Gorky portrays it, is thus clearly related to the themes of publicistic works such as *Zametki*, as an expression of Gorky's initial reaction to the events of 1905. The salvation attained by some of the *dachniki* through their own efforts to pull themselves up from 'the choking mire, rising from the bottom of the swamp,' was no longer available to the characters of *Deti solntsa* and *Varvary*. Of course, as with the polemical writings of the same period, Gorky's despair for his intelligentsia characters must be taken with a grain of salt. The value of presenting the utter futility of their existence to theatrical audiences composed largely, if not exclusively, of members of the intelligentsia, would be dubious if based on anything but the writer's hope of morally affecting his tribe.

Indeed, Gorky's next play confronted *meshchanstvo* directly with the judgment of history, in the form of the revolutionary proletariat. In *Vragi*, the proletarian hero, in the person of the factory worker, Grekov, thus makes his triumphal entrance in the Gorkian literary *oeuvre*.[28] Interestingly, the role of this worker-hero is not primarily to lead the toiling masses in this case, but to

rescue those happy few representatives of the intelligentsia who can break with the unwholesome appetites of *meshchanstvo*. The class conflict at the center of *Vragi* is observed mainly as reflected through the family life of the factory owner Zakhar Bardin's household. The struggle around the factory has the effect of intensifying the generational and sexual conflicts within the family, shattering what remains of its stability, and allowing the Bardins' young niece, Nadya, the possibility of a better, more conscious way of life. As the revolutionary workers are taken into custody for the murder of Bardin's ruthless partner, the young girl announces her defiance to her aunt:

> TATIANA: How are you going to live? I don't understand.
> NADYA: Not like this - not like this for anything on earth! I don't know what I'm going to do, but it won't be anything like what you do. I went past the verandah just now, with that officer. Grekov was standing there, smoking. He looked at me, and his eyes were laughing. Yet he must know they're about to throw him into prison.... Oh, can't you see? People like that who live as they want to aren't afraid of anything. They can be happy![29]

Nadya's disaffection from her family's way of life, galvanised and clarified through the proximity of violent class conflict, helps her to make the beginnings of a common cause with the new transformative force embodied in Grekov. With this outcome, however, arises an artistic dilemma for Gorky: positive historical forces do not necessarily make convincing fictional or dramatic characters. If every morally flawed and venal character is flawed and venal in his own way in Gorky's dramatic works, every good character seems to suffer from a predictable sameness. The contradictions and ambiguities which lend such interest to Shalimov, Cherkun, or Protasov--or to the doomed and haunting female characters like Varvara in *Dachniki*, Melanya and Liza in *Deti Solntsa*, or Nadezhda in *Varvary* -- are lacking in those characters whom Gorky uses chiefly as platforms for his own beliefs. The writer who himself laboured for his own truth under such a welter of contradictory pressures could not

permit the same luxury to the transformative intelligentsia heroes with whom he identified.

From one point of view, this could be explained with the truism that vice is intrinsically more interesting than virtue. However, such an view would be partial at best. A more comprehensive explanation is to be found in what we have already discerned in the writer's worldview. In Gorky's voluntaristic universe, in his specific conception of the role of the artist as a new Danko, heroic will is an undifferentiated substance, free of contradiction--ultimately, a tautology. As the 'reader' had explained to the 'writer' in the short story *Chitatel'* almost a decade before, 'striving' (or will) toward the absolute is identical with the absolute itself:

> Striving is what is important, the striving of the soul to find god; and if there will be souls who are seized with a striving toward god, he will be with them and enliven them, for he *is* the endless striving for perfection.[30]

Through Gorky's dramatic writing between the years in the period of the first Russian Revolution it is possible to trace the deepening esthetic and philosophical contradictions with which he struggled. As the tribe of Russian literati looked to a compromise with the autocracy, Gorky turned his face toward the proletarian revolution. While this produced increasingly strident polemics under the pressure of an immense social upheaval, Gorky's publicistic bellicosity concealed a deeper truth: the writer himself was never willing to violate the parameters of a relationship with the intelligentsia established with his emergence as a writer.

The plays and publicistic writings of this period effectively illustrate not an artistic diminution brought about by Gorky's embrace of Social Democracy, but the sharpening dilemma of the writer's own radical voluntarism. It is one thing for a writer to embrace the role of Danko, but what if will, however pure and selflessly inspired, fails to sway the tribe? The reaction of Gorky to January

9, 1905, reflected in *Zametki*, was to reject the intelligentsia categorically. The dramas of the same period immediately qualify, soften, and ultimately eradicate this rejection.

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1 *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva M. Gor'kogo* (*Moskva: Akademiia nauk*, 1958), p. 503.

2 Ibid., p. 503

3 *SS* (1953), vol. XXVIII, p. 349.

4 R.C. Williams, The Other Bolsheviks (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1986), p. 51.

5 For a fuller discussion of Gorky's political develoment before and during 1905, see Yedlin, T., 'Maxim Gorky: His Early Revolutionary Activity and his Involvement in the Revolution of 1905,' in Canadian Slavonic Papers, vol. XVII, No. 1 (Spring, 1975), pp. 76-105.

6 Ibid., p. 93.

7 Ibid., p. 100.

8 Cited in D. Floyd, Russia in Revolt (London: MacDonald, 1969. p. 64.

9 *Letopis'*, p. 556.

10 *Letopis'*, p. 611.

11 Gorky's treatment in New York may have had something to do with helping the writer develop the extremely uncharitable assessments of American capitalism contained in sketches such as *Gorod zheltogo dyavola* ('The City of the Yellow Devil'), *SS* (1953) vol. VII, pp. 7-19.

12 Gorky, *SS* (1953) vol. XXIII, pp. 341- 367.

13 *Letopis*, p. 557. Gorky had also been active in collecting money for this paper.

14 The very vagueness of this term served Gorky's intentions, which were in any case not analytical but purely moralistic. The author defines *meshchanstvo* as 'the spiritual order of the contemporary representative of the ruling classes.' Gorky, *SS* (1953), vol. 23, p. 341.

15 Gorky was personally acquainted with Tolstoy, but was infuriated by an article the Count had written in March 1905 condemning the revolutionary movement. He had written an open letter in response to Tolstoy's article, but at the last moment withdrew it before it could be published, probably out of deference for his one-time mentor. The unpublished letter laid out the basic lines pursued later in *Zametki*.

16 Ibid., p. 353-354.

17 Ibid.

18 This was the position articulated by Berdyaev, for example, with his conversion to idealism in the 1890s. Ivanov-Razumnik reiterated the argument in concise terms in his contemporaneous work *Istoriya russkoi obshchestvennoi mysli* (History of Russian Social Thought, 1907), defining the intelligentsia as: 'ethically an *anti*-bourgeois, sociologically a *non-estate, non-class coherent grouping* characterized by its *creation* of new forms and its *active* realization of them in practice.' Quoted by A.L. Tait, 'Contemporary Attitudes to Gorky's "The Mother" and "A Confession,"' in W. Harrison, and A. Pyman, ed. Poetry Prose and Public Opinion (London: Avebury,1984), p. 56.

[19] N.M. Minsky (1855-1937), a leading member of the St. Petersburg Religious Philosophical Society, had, for legal reasons, allowed his name to be used by the Bolsheviks as titular editor of *Novaya zhizn.*' Ironically, his own reply to Gorky was rejected by the paper's Bolshevik publishers.

[20] For example, in the context of his attacks on Dostoevsky, Gorky writes the eulogy which the great writer *should* have given at the opening of the monument to Pushkin. *SS* (1953), vol. XXIII., p. 353.

[21] See quotation above, ibid., p. 354.

[22] *PSS* (1968), vol., VII, p. 289.

[23] Ibid., p. 278.

[24] Ibid., p. 283.

[25] Ibid., p. 291.

[26] Ibid., p. 295.

[27] Ibid., p. 338.

[28] In fact, this distinction is shared with the young Pavel Vlasov, Grekov's equally wooden counterpart in the novel *Mat',* (1906) completed by Gorky at about the same time.

[29] *PSS* (1968), vol. VII, p. 543.

[30] *PSS* (1968), vol. IV, p. 119.

CONCLUSION

Recent political changes in the Soviet Union are likely to have considerable implications for literary scholarship, and our understanding of Gorky in particular. At first glance, considering the role which Gorky's figure has played in the official regimentation of Soviet literature and the imposition of the method of Socialist Realism, it might be concluded that Gorky scholarship is due to be toppled from its privileged position, alongside so many other icons of the Stalinist past. In fact, however, Gorky scholarship, like Gorky himself, has never been a stranger to sharp ideological controversy. The changes which will likely come into play over the next years in Soviet literary studies will serve only to make a clearer basis for this controversy.

Gorky is unarguably the most intensively studied individual writer in Soviet literature. The latest, heavily annotated twenty-five volume Soviet edition of Gorky's literary works (which does not include personal correspondence or publicistic writings) appeared in the late 1960s. Alongside this are the many secondary sources produced over the past century: exhaustive studies, chronologies, bibliographic, biographical and critical books and articles, representing a huge continent of factual and interpretive information about an individual life and literary *oeuvre*.

But for all the wealth of sources, the universe of this writer remains uncharted in significant respects. It is particularly ironic, for example, that the mantle of state authority draped over Gorky in the Soviet Union has left the

writer largely untouched by the international trend of Marxian critical theory which has taken root, particularly in Western academic circles, over the past two decades. In this light, the anticipated 'de-canonisation' of Gorky in the Soviet Union presents the prospect of a new and better appreciation of his true role in Russian and Soviet literature.

The preceding study is merely a survey of certain trends in Gorky's early writing as they relate to Gorky's relationship to the intelligentsia, emerging around a historical moment which was to have lasting historical significance for Russian literature. Its purpose has been to help situate Gorky's early writings in their proper historical location, at the same time examining some of the contradictory pressures and upheavals in Russian society which came uniquely to bear on the young writer, as expressed through his work.

The prospect of a definitive literary biography of Gorky for the post-Stalinist period still appears to be a long way in the future. Certainly, from the point of view of this study, the author's relationship with the intelligentsia would provide a central focus for such an undertaking. But in order to do justice to the topic, this would also necessarily involve a breadth of scope and ambition well beyond that of the preceding pages. It would, in the first place, include a comprehensive, rather than episodic view of Gorky's entire literary and publicistic output between 1890 and 1907. It would have a multidisciplinary character, bringing out more clearly the writer's philosophical development and influences within and between his political and literary milieus. Similarly, such a study would involve considerable research into the writer's personal correpondence (only touched upon above), in order to chart the details of personal relationships more precisely against the thematic content of Gorky's contemporary literary works. Finally, a definitive literary biography of Gorky would also be unthinkable in the absence of the

more nuanced approaches to analysis of original texts made possible by post-modern critical theory.

After surveying literary aspects of Gorky's relationship to the Russian intelligentsia in these years, we can assert that Gorky's struggle for the positive hero, and his effort to resolve this role as a writer was a synthesis arising from the writer's social position *vis a vis* his adoptive caste. From the very beginning his search for the transformative hero revolved around the question of will rather than ideas. Gorky found in Nietzsche's voluntarism a confirmation for his belief that the dynamic force of human history is the individual will. Against Nietzsche was the writer's radical humanistic impulse, and an optimism for the positive future which the heroic will could open up for all mankind.

In this sense, Gorky's work crystallised earlier traditions of Russian literary radicalism, including the revolutionary intelligentsia's voluntaristic impulses, and its vision of self-sacrifice 'for the people.' In this latter capacity the writer clearly represents an authentic continuity between this utopian tradition and the method of Socialist Realism. By the same token, Gorky's well-known repudiation of modernism can be directly related to his rejection of the the anti-political and mystically inclined Russian intelligentsia circles which gave birth to a core component of the modernist movement.

In reflecting on the 'crisis of identity' which will inevitably affect traditional Soviet Gorky scholarship in the coming years, it is important to bear in mind another ideological 'collapse' which has affected literary theory over the past decade, namely, the collapse of modernism as a driving esthetic force in the cultures of Europe and North America. With the advent of post-modernism, it has been suggested that the future of Western culture lies in its

past. In the study of Gorky, the anti-modernist, perhaps the true past has yet to be discovered.

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